



## Associazione Italiana Furetti - FURETTOMANIA

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### **APHIS/USDA**

Regulatory Analysis & Development

PPD/APHIS, Station 3C71

4700 River Road, Unit 118

Riverdale, MD 20737-1238

Subject: **Agency Docket #04-088-1 - 9 CFR Part 3  
Animal Welfare - Standards for Ferrets**

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to introduce the Italian Ferret Association, better known as FURETTOMANIA, as a non profit association located in Italy, which takes care of whatever concerns ferrets and their welfare in our Country. One of our primary purposes is to provide information about ferrets, organize ferret meetings to share our info with anyone interested in, promoting proper care and **medical** treatment, and last but absolutely not least to rescue homeless and unwanted ferrets. Rescued ferrets are vaccinated for canine distemper, microchipped, spayed/neutered, and then kept in our houses for re-education in case needed until a new permanent loving home is found for them and they are adopted.

Over the last 5 years ferrets are becoming increasingly popular as pets in our Country. Many ferrets here are imported from overseas, especially from US ferret farms, and often they are really too young to be sold, sometimes not yet able to properly eat kibble, exposed to high temperatures for too long, without any adequate housing and with not enough clean water and food for all of them. These events take to a lot of health problems, sometimes to the death of most of the kits, caused by the long travel in absolutely not adequate conditions.

C.F. 92543220153

Associazione di volontariato ai sensi della L. 11 agosto 1991, n. 266, dalla legge regionale n. L.R. 22/93, e dalle norme generali del nostro ordinamento giuridico



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For this reason we would like to support the petition to create ferret-specific regulations to govern the handling, care, treatment, and transportation of domestic ferrets. Such regulations are greatly needed and should be separate from the regulations governing other animals. With my signature, on behalf of the Italian Ferret Association I am also in agreement with the American Ferret Association's proposed implementation of safeguards for the shipment of domestic ferret kits (babies).

### AFA specifications for shipment of ferret kits include the following:

- Kits may not be shipped earlier than 8 weeks of age.
- Kits may not be shipped until all four **adult** canine teeth are in place and **adult** molars, both mandibular and maxillary.
- No ferret kits may be shipped with a body weight of less than 500 grams.
- In the case of kits 8-9 weeks of age who are to be shipped, CDV vaccine that is USDA licensed for use in ferrets is to be administered within 4 days prior to shipment.
- In all ferret kits, spay/neuter incisions must be healed prior to shipment
- No cargo shipping of ferret kits will be allowed: ONLY Priority Shipping.
- When transported, ferret kits need to be checked often to make sure they have access to clean drinking water and food at all times.

### These general protections must also apply:

- Through the use of air conditioning and artificial heating where necessary, ferret kits must be protected from temperatures over 80 degrees and from extreme cold. They must also be protected from rain, snow and other elements of the weather.
- Kits must be protected by well-designed housing that incorporates the following characteristics: all elements in good repair, with no pieces that ferrets can chew through or ingest; no sharp edges on which ferrets can be cut; if flooring is mesh, openings must be small enough so that ferrets' feet and legs are protected; cages must be large enough to allow normal and comfortable walking, sleeping, etc.
- Other animals should not have access to ferret housing.
- Ferret food should be stored away from anything toxic, and protected to prevent spoilage.
- Ferret bedding should be clean and dry.

These specifications put forth by the American Ferret Association are designed to set a precedent that will make transport less stressful for ferrets. Such protections will result in

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a higher survival rate for ferret kits, and help change the widespread attitude that kits can simply be "replaced" if they do not survive. Another advantage of these specifications is that the kit's initial canine distemper vaccine (the first of three) must be administered prior to shipment just after a kit has reached the age of 8 weeks, when the vaccine has its highest proven efficacy. These specifications should also help improve the overall health of ferret kits, lessening the likelihood of conditions such as a prolapsed rectum from food conversions and problems with eating ferret kibble due to lack of size, maturity, or adult dentition. In addition, the stipulation of a minimum age of 8 weeks before shipment will allow ferret kits to adequately recover from infant surgery. Most commercial ferret breeders surgically descent and neuter/spay the kits by the very early age of 5-6 weeks, and the kits are at risk until they fully recuperate.

**I enclose 4 copies, all of which have original signatures.**

Sincerely,

**ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA FURETTI - FURETTOMANIA**

Via Delle Robinie, 9 - 26832 Cervignano d'Adda (Lo) - ITALY

Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> 2005

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